

To Speak in Parables

Proclamation of the Gospel in the Parables of Jesus

Just Don't Call Me Late for Supper

The Parable of the Great Supper

For Openers:

- ◇ What is the most elegant (or expensive) dinner you have ever attended?
 - ◇ What is the most fun you have ever had celebrating a wedding?
 - ◇ What is the lamest excuse you have ever heard someone give in order to get out of doing something?
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For Your Information:

Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other slaves, saying, Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet. 5 But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves, The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet. 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For

Luke 14:15-24

One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God! 16 Then Jesus said to him, Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 17 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, Come; for everything is ready now. 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets. 19 Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets. 20 Another said, I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, Go out at once into the streets and alleys of the city and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. 22 And the slave said, Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room. 23 Then the master said to the slave, Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.

Thomas 64*

Jesus said, A man had received visitors. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests. He went to the first one and said to him, My master invites you. He said, I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I ask to be excused from the dinner. He went to another and said to him, My master has invited you. He said to him, I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time. He went to another and said to him, My master invites you. He said to him, My friend is going to get married, and I am to prepare the banquet. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused from the dinner. He went to another and said to him, My master invites you. He said to him, I have just bought a farm, and I am on my way to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused. The servant returned and said to his master, Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused. The master said to his servant, Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine. Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father.

**The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus. Though it shows the influence of an early Christian heresy called Gnosticism, it is still very important because its versions of Jesus sayings are independent of those recorded in the canonical Gospels.*

Suggestions for further study:

Be sure to note the contexts which introduce the parable. Read the parables in Matthew 21:28-45 and especially note the statement in 21:31. Read Luke 14:7-14 and note how it prepares us for the Great Supper Parable. Especially note 14:13.

In the ancient world, a double-invitation (one in advance and one at the appointed time) was a special sign of courtesy practiced by the wealthy.

Read Jesus parables in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; 13:47-50; and 25:31-33. What theme ties these all together?

Note that Matthew's version of the parable actually continues with verses 11-14 and the issue about a man who was not wearing a wedding robe. How does this scene relate to the rest of the parable? Compare that story with the rabbinic parable on the right.

A Parable of Rabbi Johanan b. Zakkai - b. Shabbat 153a*

R. Eliezer said: Repent one day before your death. His disciples asked R. Eliezer: But does a person know on what day he will die? He said: So much the more must he repent today; perhaps he will die tomorrow. It follows that a person should repent every day. Even so said Solomon in his wisdom, 'Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack ointment (Eccles.9:8). R. Johanan b. Zakkai spoke a parable: [It is like] a king who invited his servants to a feast and did not appoint them a time. The wise among them adorned themselves and sat down by the door of the palace, for they said: Is anything lacking in a palace? The foolish among them went to their work, for they said: Is a feast ever given without preparation? Suddenly the king summoned his servants. The wise among them went in before him adorned as they were, and the foolish went in before him in their working clothes. The king rejoiced to see the wise and was angry to see the foolish, and said: These who adorned themselves for the feast shall sit down and eat and drink; but those who did not adorn themselves for the feast shall stand and look on.

**The Babylonian Talmud, from which the parable by Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai comes, is a foundational document of rabbinic Judaism. The written text of the Talmud is from the 5th century CE, but R. Johanan, who perhaps did speak the parable, lived in the 1st century CE.*

For Your Consideration:

- 1) Chart out the cast of characters involved in each account. What details are significant?

	HOST	SUBORDINATES	INVITED GUESTS	UNINVITED GUESTS
Matthew				
Luke				
Thomas				

- 2) Now chart out on a separate sheet the sequence of events as it occurs in each parable. What is important about these details?
- 3) What kind of dinner is served according to Matthew? For use of this imagery elsewhere in Matthew, see 9:15 and 25:1-3. Especially note how the motif is used in Revelations 19:6-9.
- 4) What excuses are given for not attending the dinner? Are any of them legitimate? Why are they making excuses? Be sure to read Deuteronomy 20:5-7. How is this passage informative?
- 5) Who ends up coming to the dinner? How does this reflect on the host? With Luke's version, compare it to: Isaiah 35:4-6; Luke 7:22-23; 14:12-14. With Matthew's version, compare Matthew 13:47-50.
- 6) Remember that the context in which this parable is told is while sitting at dinner party. What do the guests at that party feel (like) when Jesus is done telling the parable?
- 7) Which version of the parable is the most challenging to you? The most encouraging to you? Why?
- 8) Considering the guests who end up attending, is it a supper you wouldn't be caught dead at? Or one you would die to attend?

For Later:

- ◇ What excuses do you use to avoid God in your life?
- ◇ What are some ways that you will help the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame?